South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
November 6, 2006

Dear Community Friends:

Block Watch 102

In our last newsletter we discussed what Block Watch is. In our effort to dispel rumor, myth and misconceptions, we now present Block Watch 102: What Block Watch Is _Not_.

Block Watch is _not_ a single entity. There are over 3000 individual active Block Watch groups in the city of Seattle. They all have a slightly different flavor, feel, focus and level of participation. Some block watch groups consist of just their street from corner to corner. Others encompass several blocks. Neighbors decide what works best for them.

Block Watch is _not_ a police department controlled tool. While the police department assists neighbors in getting block watches established, the police department does not "run" them. You on the blocks do. Those involved in Block Watch are not police department employees, the department does not "supervise" Block Watch captains or contacts, nor do these captains and contacts "report" to the police.

Block Watch is _not_ about patrolling your neighborhood with flashlights and baseball bats. We encourage neighbors to be visible and out and about in their neighborhood: the more you are, the less likely bad guys will want to be around. So, some neighbors do engage in safety walks. That doesn't mean they confront every unknown person they see and challenging their purpose for being on "their" street.

Block Watch is _not_ intended as a means to harass, coerce, intimidate or cry wolf. Block Watch is about preventing crime and improving public safety of the neighborhood. It's not about using the police or city systems to hassle someone you don't like. If you have an issue with a neighbor, before you start rallying the block watch and city resources to go after that neighbor, examine what it is about the neighbor you have an issue with. Is it really a public safety concern, or do you just not like the way the person lives? There may not be a direct public safety, criminal or quality of life issue to be addressed, so don't use Block Watch to create one.

Block Watch is _not_ about living in your neighbor's hip pocket, or you telling your neighbors every aspect of _your_ business. You can still have your privacy. It _is_ about getting to know each other and being familiar enough with each other to know who lives in the neighborhood and who doesn't, which cars are part of the neighborhood and which aren't, and when something suspicious is going on.

So If Block Watch Is Not Those Things, Then What Is It?

- When you go to your window to open or close your drapes, take a moment to glance around the neighborhood and see what's going on.
- When you go out to your car or walk to the bus stop, instead of focusing on the car or where your feet are going, look around and check the neighborhood.
- When you go out of town, you let a trusted neighbor know so they can keep an eye out for your place. And if you have someone staying at your place while you're out of town, you let neighbors know so that your house sitter doesn't get 911 called about them.
- Get to know each other, communicate with each other, and you let people you see on the street know you acknowledge their presence.
  This is Block Watch.

Until Then, Take Care And Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator